

FORT SMITH NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

DISPATCH

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 3 SUMMER 2001

“CHEERING WAS THE ORDER OF THE DAY”

Fort Smith, like most Federal posts, was the regional center of attention at the Civil War in 1861. The fort was garrisoned by two companies of the 1st Cavalry under the command of Captain Samuel Sturgis. Sturgis knew the winds of secession were blowing in Arkansas and realized he would be powerless to defend Fort Smith. His superiors in St. Louis agreed and ordered the post evacuated. Sturgis and his command left late in the evening on April 21, 1861, and headed southwest to Fort Washita.

Sturgis' second in command, Captain James McIntosh, resigned to join the Confederate Army. He was killed in action at Pea Ridge in 1862. Sturgis was promoted to brigadier general in the Union Army by the end of the war.

One hour after the U.S. Army evacuated Fort Smith, 800 State troops arrived from Little Rock and seized the post. Captain Alexander Montgomery and Major Richard Gatlin remained at the post and were captured and paroled. Gatlin later became a Confederate brigadier general.

On April 21, 1861 State troops, under the command of Solon Borland, acting on di-

rect orders of Governor Rector, approached Fort Smith and found the garrison deserted. Arkansas joined the confederacy almost a month later and turned Fort Smith and the Little Rock arsenal over to the Confederate States of America.

The May 7, 1861 Sacramento Daily Union newspaper described the State troops arrival, “The flag of the confederacy was raised over the fort amid the firing of cannon and the cheers of the multitude, three cheers were given for Arkansas citizen soldiery, three cheers for Jefferson Davis, and three for Governor Henry Rector. One of the Arkansas citizen soldiers present was W.E. Woodruff of the Little Rock “Pulaski Battery.” He also described the atmosphere, “Cheering was the order of the day...artillery salutes and brass bands wore out all ears, patience, and ‘Dixie.’”

While the summer of 1861 was a festive and exciting time, the reality and tragedy of the war soon became clear. Fort Smith was eventually occupied by both armies, and endured suffering with the rest of the country.

TOM WING, PARK RANGER

COMMEMORATION OF STATE OCCUPATION

On April 22-23 the park commemorated the 140th anniversary of the State occupation of Fort Smith. Members of the Trans-mississippi Battalion, including the 15th Arkansas, set up encampments on the park grounds and presented infantry and cavalry demonstrations. The re-enactors, along with our cannon crew, took part in the raising of the First National flag and cannon

salute. Volunteers presented a time line through the encampments. As visitors were guided through the camp, they saw historical vignettes of a young soldier and the family he left behind.

In September 2002, Fort Smith NHS will commemorate the federal occupation of the fort that occurred in 1863.



The Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp 1830, Battle of Massard Prairie generously donated this 10' x 20' First National Confederate flag to the park. It was raised during the park's Civil War weekend.

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

THE MILITARY STORY AT FORT SMITH

- *The first soldiers: United States Rifle Regiment*
- *Prisoners at the fort*
- *Confederate occupation of the fort*
- *57th U.S. Colored Troops*
- *Famous military figures at Fort Smith*

SUPERINTENDENT'S COLUMN

"...WE TRY TO MAKE SURE THE VISITOR UNDERSTANDS THE MILITARY ROLE IN THE HISTORY OF FORT SMITH."

When I first arrived here in 1992, I was probably typical of many of our visitors and surprised at the size and scope of our military history. Judge Parker and the court period were the "big" story and the military story was secondary at best. We had the first fort foundations, the flagpole and the commissary, but we were still weak on what the visitor learned about the military from their visit. I was also disappointed that we were the only fort in the National Park System that did not have a cannon.

Since then we have certainly made positive changes. We now have three cannons, an active military living history program including black powder programs, Civil War encampments several times a year and new exhibits to assist the visitor in understanding the military role in the history of Fort Smith. We even have school programs that emphasize the 1820 and Civil War military periods.

We have also learned that African Americans had a role not only in the court period, but also in the military story, all the way back to the 1820s. The Judge Parker and the lawmen and outlaw story will always be our main draw, but once we have people here, they will have plenty of opportunities to hear "the rest of the story".

We had over 7,700 visitors in March, the best numbers for March since 1992. A lot of this increase was due to the nice weather and the number of schools visiting us. The new facilities and the ranger programs are a big hit with teachers and students and they are keeping us busy. We hope you will encourage your friends and neighbors to come on down to see what we are doing.

BILL BLACK
PARK SUPERINTENDENT

DID YOU KNOW?



Accused of cowardice by Stonewall Jackson, this photo may actually be that of his cousin Robert. Who was this man?

(Answer on page 3)

Typical of frontier Army posts, Fort Smith was a crossroads for many distinguished soldiers.

- Stephen Long picked Belle Point as the site for the first fort. Long had a lengthy career in the Topographical Engineers.
- Zachary Taylor supervised construction of the second fort. Taylor was elected 12th President of the United States after an impressive career in the army.
- James Longstreet served as paymaster in the military district that included Fort Smith. His name appears on the post returns frequently. Longstreet was Robert E. Lee's 2nd in command of the Army of Northern Virginia.
- Richard Garnett spent time in Fort Smith in the 1840's working against the illegal whiskey trade. Garnett was a brigadier general in the Confederate army and was killed at Gettysburg.
- Lafayette McLaws was one time post commander at Fort Smith. He was also a Confederate general.
- Samuel Sturgis was post commander at the beginning of the Civil War and was promoted to general by the end of the fighting.
- Randolph Marcy and son-in-law George McClellan both spent time in Fort Smith before the Civil War. McClellan went on to lead the Army of the Potomac and eventually ran against Lincoln for president in 1864. Marcy wrote a popular settlers guide to California.

FORT SMITH “IN THE NEWS”

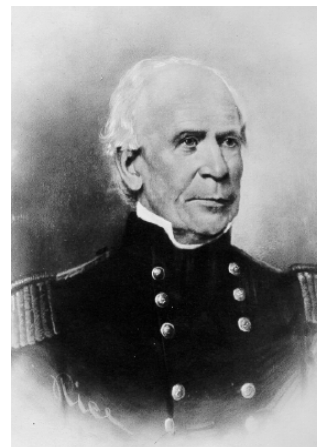
Fort Smith Herald June 7, 1848

This news story was written during the peak of activity during the second Fort Smith. General Thomas Jessup, referred to in this article, had been Quartermaster General when construction began on the second fort in the late 1830s.

On Sunday last, a command of Soldiers arrived in this place from Fort Gibson, having in their custody two prisoners, one a soldier named Seymour, and the other a Mrs. Wilson better known as Ann Pinder, who lives near Fort Gibson. They are both charged with being concerned in kidnapping and running off, a few weeks ago, three Seminole negroes, freed by General Jessup in Florida. Mrs. Wilson, we understand, claims these negroes, and says she pur-

chased them from the Seminoles, and had them in her possession for some time, but they were subsequently released by the U.S. troops at Fort Gibson and placed under the protection of the Government at that place. However, be this as it may, she is now confined here as a prisoner, under the charge of stealing and running off the negroes, and as the matter shall have to undergo a judicial investigation, we refrain from making further remarks. Since the above writing, we have been informed that Seymour is not a prisoner but has turned over state's evidence, and has disclosed the names of the persons engaged in kidnapping the negroes and everything connected with the affair.

Mrs. Wilson has since been brought before Justice Pearson, and after hearing the testimony in the case, she was released.



General Thomas Jessup

Photo Answer from page 2:
Richard Garnett

CHILDREN'S CORNER

These hands-on programs are free and all supplies are provided. Classes are offered twice each day: 9:30—11:00 a.m. and 1:30—3:00 p.m. Reservations may be made by calling 501-783-3961.

Tuesday, August 7 — Piecing Patches

Hand piecing and quilting will be taught as children make a simple four-patch coaster. Class size is limited to 12; ages 7-14.

Saturday, August 11 — Osage Ribbon-

work Osage Ribbonwork is the art of sewing ribbons on fabric or blankets to make a design. Using colored paper and modified geometric patterns, children will create their own design.



Mother and daughter working on recent paper quilt project



U.S. Rifle Regiment “soldier” at Belle Point



Voyageur caps were made in the French Arkansas workshop



During our Civil War Week-end, children made a replica of the Fort Sumter flag.



BOOKSTORE BROWSINGS — NEW ITEMS

Hell on the Border

Samuel Harmon
Eastern National reprint,
2001

This newly republished book is exclusive to the park's bookstore. Originally published in 1899, it was the first book to detail Judge Isaac C. Parker's tenure. The author, Samuel Harman, was a one-time juror in the court and collaborated with a defense attorney from Parker's court to write what has become the most accessible source of information on Judge Parker's Court.



Featured on the park's
new T-shirt!

Photo of prisoners on
courthouse steps c.1880

The Preacher's Tale:

*The Civil War Journal
of Rev. Francis
Springer, Chaplain,
U.S. Army of the Fron-
tier*

Edited by William Furry
University of Arkansas
Press, 2001

Francis Springer, a Lutheran minister, was appointed by Lincoln to be the post chaplain at Fort Smith and he served there from November 1863 to 1867. During that time he kept a diary which chronicles the social, political, and economic impact of the war and reconstruction on the region.

In His Own Words: Quotations of Judge Isaac C. Parker

This short pamphlet includes all the quotations of Parker featured in our exhibits, plus others, and is arranged by theme.

A United States Prison

This article, by Anna Dawes, was originally published in 1886 in the philanthropic journal *Lend a Hand*. It includes an account of the appalling jail conditions she saw during a visit to Fort Smith. The article received Congress' attention and they soon appropriated funds to build a new jail in Fort Smith.

RANGER RECOMMENDATION

Green Coats and Glory: The United States Regiment of Riflemen, 1808-1821

John C. Fredriksen, Ph.D.

Old Fort Niagara Association, 2000

1999 Winner of the William L. Peterson Award

Best Essay on Military History

Long awaited by early military historians, this book fills an important gap in the little known childhood of the U.S. Army. Originally published in the *Military Collector & Historian*, the work is a discussion of the founding, battles, leaders, and ever-changing roles of the U.S. Rifle Regiment. Drawing on the American riflemen of the Revolutionary War, Fredriksen explains the origins and tactical



use of the regiment in the War of 1812. Described as a "spiritual forebear of today's special forces" the Rifle Regiment has languished in obscurity. The author describes in flowing detail the officers and engagements of this distinguished regiment. Many familiar names are found in the work including Thomas A. Smith, namesake of Fort Smith, who was the second colonel of the regiment, and Colonel James Gibson, a rifle officer, namesake of Fort Gibson and the highest-ranking fatality in the War of 1812. Other well-known riflemen included Josiah Snelling and Bennett Riley. Each also had military posts named in their honor. The chronicled exploits of Colonel Benjamin Forsyth and his company of riflemen is truly fascinating. This book will give the reader an important perspective of the legacy left by the soldiers who built the first Fort Smith.

Tom Wing, Park Ranger

CURATORIAL SPOTLIGHT: 57TH U.S. COLORED TROOPS

Sorting through a bag of artifacts recently, one item served as a reminder of the cultural diversity of our history — a small fragment of disintegrating metal that was once the cut out letters of a stencil. Barely visible are the remains of the letters for the soldier's name. More well preserved is the number of the regiment, the 57th.

During the Civil War it was common for soldiers to mark equipment, such as canteens, and the inside of their uniforms with their name and regiment. This was done using a stencil and paint. What is unique about this particular stencil is the regiment to which this soldier belonged.

The 57th Infantry Regiment was designated as being of "African Descent." Such regiments would later be known as the United States Colored Troops or U.S.C.T. President Lincoln had great hopes for using black troops in the

Union army and in an 1863 letter to Andrew Johnson wrote "The colored population is the great available, yet unavailed of, force for restoring the Union..."

The 57th Infantry Regiment was originally mustered into the army as the 4th Arkansas Volunteers and spent most of its time around Little Rock defending the railroads and providing support for Union troops. In the Spring of 1864 a small detachment was sent to southwest Arkansas with Major General Fredrick Steele, Commanding U.S. Forces in Arkansas who writes to Major General Henry W. Halleck, Chief of Staff. "Our Troops behaved in all the engagements of this campaign in the most gallant manner... The conduct of the colored troops of my command proves that the African can be made as formidable in battle as a soldier of any color."

The 57th came to Fort Smith

after the Civil War had ended, in July 1865, to relieve Arkansas troops that were to muster out. It was a surprise to many of the people of Fort Smith to learn that one-third of the enlisted men in the 57th could read.

Colonel Paul Harwood, regiment commander, commented that the conduct of the troops when off duty had been "modest and respectful."

Late in March of 1866, the 57th was ordered to participate in the New Mexico Expedition at which point they mutinied and refused to go.

Colonel Howe lost no time in ordering out the 3rd U. S. Cavalry surrounding the garrison and disarmed the soldiers. The 57th was then sent to Little Rock and eventually returned to Fort Smith before leaving for New Mexico.

EMILY LOVICK



Fragment of stencil from 57th U.S. Colored Troops

"THE COLORED
POPULATION IS
THE GREATEST
AVAILABLE, YET
UNAVAILED OF,
FORCE FOR
RESTORING THE
UNION..."

LINCOLN, 1863

VOLUNTEERS IN THE PARK

Volunteers are needed for the first fort artillery program which will begin in the early fall. This new program will focus attention on the U.S. Rifle Regiment and their activities during the first fort period, 1817-1824. Once the uniforms have been received the park will conduct drill sessions for volunteers.

This summer Holly Houser, a student at the University of the Ozarks, has been doing an internship with the park. She is

helping with interpretative programs, research, and organizing the library.

Judith McGee has devoted many hours to cataloguing books and preparing them for their move to the new library.

Our children's programs have been quite popular and well attended. Patty Zabel has volunteered for several of the workshops.

Betty Napier and Charlie Limberg continue to be our constant and faithful volunteers at the front desk.

Our Civil War cannon crew has been busy with two programs a month and we appreciate their giving up part of their Saturdays.

If you are interested in volunteer opportunities at the park, contact Park Ranger Tom Wing at 501-783-3961.

CIVIL WAR WEEKEND —TIMELINE VIGNETTES



Park Ranger Tom Wing greets visitors on timeline tour



Soldiers drilling



Discussing strategy over checkers



Receiving a letter from a loved one



Volunteer reenactors prepare for next tour



Stacked arms

DEPUTY MARSHAL WEEKEND

On Sunday, May 13 the park held a candlelight vigil, commemorating the deputy marshals killed in the line of duty while working for the Federal Court for the Western District of Arkansas from 1872 through 1896. 86 lighted luminaries lined the outline of the fort walls, each marked with the name of a slain officer. Members of Ghostriders and other reenactors participated in programs throughout the weekend.



V.I.P. Judith McGee lights luminaries



U.S. Marshal Kenneth McFerran and Park Ranger Eric Leonard talk to visitors



Visitor along row of luminaries



Members of Ghostriders



V.I.P. Susie Trisler at gateway



Levi Lewis talks to visitor



Tim Ridgeway at Addison Beck's luminary



FORT SMITH NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

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Phone: 501-783-3961
Fax: 501-783-5307
www.nps.gov/fosm

Experience Your America

CALENDAR OF EVENTS—AUGUST & SEPTEMBER, 2001

Saturday, August 4

Cannon Program

Monday, August 6

Execution Anniversary Program

Tuesday, August 7

Children's Programs

Saturday, August 11

Children's Programs

Wednesday, August 15

Execution Anniversary Program

Saturday, August 18

Cannon Program

Saturday, August 25

NPS Founder's Day
free entry

Wednesday, August 29

Execution Anniversary Program

Thursday, August 30

Execution Anniversary Program

Saturday, September 1

Cannon Program

Monday, September 3

Execution Anniversary Program

Saturday, September 8

Execution Anniversary Program

Sunday, September 9

Execution Anniversary Program

Thursday, September 13

40th Anniversary of Fort Smith NHS
Open House — free entry

Saturday, September 15

Celebration of 40th Anniversary —
living history programs and musical
performances throughout the day

Thursday, September 20

Execution Anniversary Program

Saturday, September 29

Cannon Program

Cannon Programs are held at 11 a.m. on the parade grounds. Execution Anniversary Programs are offered at the gallows at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.



Both Union and Confederate units are represented in the park's cannon programs.

